

## **MINUTES**

### **MONTANA SENATE 57th LEGISLATURE - REGULAR SESSION COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND CULTURAL RESOURCES**

**Call to Order:** By **CHAIRMAN BILL GLASER**, on January 29, 2001 at 3:00 P.M., in Room 455 Capitol.

#### **ROLL CALL**

**Members Present:**

Sen. Bill Glaser, Chairman (R)  
Sen. Jack Wells, Vice Chairman (R)  
Sen. John C. Bohlinger (R)  
Sen. Edward Butcher (R)  
Sen. Jon Ellingson (D)  
Sen. Jim Elliott (D)  
Sen. Alvin Ellis Jr. (R)  
Sen. Sam Kitzenberg (R)  
Sen. Don Ryan (D)  
Sen. Debbie Shea (D)  
Sen. Mike Sprague (R)  
Sen. Mignon Waterman (D)

**Members Excused:** Sen. Dale Berry (R)  
Sen. John Cobb (R)

**Members Absent:** None.

**Staff Present:** Linda Ashworth, Committee Secretary  
Eddy McClure, Legislative Branch

**Please Note:** These are summary minutes. Testimony and discussion are paraphrased and condensed.

**Committee Business Summary:**

Hearing(s) & Date(s) Posted: SB 24, 1/23/2001; SB 239,  
1/23/2001; SB 255, 1/23/2001  
Executive Action:

**CHAIRMAN GLASER** announced that the committee would be hearing combined testimony on SB 24 and SB 239 because of their similarities concerning base entitlement.

HEARING ON SB 24 AND SB 239

**Sponsor:** SEN. JOHN BOHLINGER, SD 7, Billings (SB 24)  
SEN. DON RYAN, SD 22, Great Falls

**Proponents:** Conrad Stroebe, High School Trustee, Billings  
Teresa Stroebe, Elementary Trustee from Lockwood,  
Billings  
Dan Zorn, Assistant Superintendent of Schools,  
Kalispell  
Bill Sutton, School District #29, Somers  
Bob Nystuem, President, Chamber of Commerce,  
Kalispell  
Eric Feaver, Montana Education Association/Montana  
Federation of Teachers

**Opponents:** Dave Puyear, Montana Rural Education Association

**Opening Statement by Sponsor:**

**SEN. JOHN BOHLINGER** opened on SB 24. **SEN. BOHLINGER** testified SB 24 is a bill that would amend the definition of basic entitlement to each high school in each high school district; amending Section 20-9-306.

**SEN. BOHLINGER** stated that today's competitive work environment requires a good education. Montana has a tradition of good schools. He indicated two major problems are beginning to surface in the public education arena and both of these problems have solutions. The first problem is that Montana teachers are underpaid. Secondly, **SEN. BOHLINGER** argued, schools are becoming overcrowded resulting in a crisis for education in the state.

**SEN. BOHLINGER** offered an amendment (Sb002401.aem) to SB 24, **EXHIBIT** (eds23a01) .

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**SEN. DON RYAN** opened on SB 239. **SEN. RYAN** explained that SB 239 would amend the definition of basic entitlement to increase the entitlement for senior high schools and 4-year high schools from \$206,000 to \$250,000. It would also increase the entitlement for each elementary school, that is not an approved and accredited junior high school, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade school, or middle school from \$18,540 to \$50,000. It would also provide an entitlement of \$100,000 for each elementary district with an approved and accredited junior high school, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade school or middle school.

**SEN. RYAN** offered an amendment (Sb023901.aem) to SB 239, **EXHIBIT(eds23a02)**. **SEN. RYAN** accented his testimony with information regarding district size categories and enrollment, **EXHIBIT(eds23a03)**; Montana Elementary ANB for 1991-2001, **EXHIBIT(eds23a04)**; state share of school general fund budgets, **EXHIBIT(eds23a05)**; costs, **EXHIBIT(eds23a06)**; a model of the 2002 fiscal plan, **EXHIBIT(eds23a07)**; and a comparison of SB 70, HB 31 and HB 121, **EXHIBIT(eds23a08)**.

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**Proponents' Testimony:**

**Conrad Stroebe, high school trustee from Billings,** avowed support for SB 24. **Mr. Stroebe** offered written testimony, **EXHIBIT(eds23a09)**, and punctuated his testimony with additional information, **EXHIBIT(eds23a10)**.

**Teresa Stroebe, Elementary trustee from Lockwood in Billings,** rose in support of SB 24. She submitted written testimony, **EXHIBIT (9)**.

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**SEN. SAM KITZENBERG** requested that those testifying, in favor of SB 24 and SB 239, offer solutions to finding the revenues to fund the suggestions made in the bills.

**CHAIRMAN GLASER** echoed the comments stating that money is a large part of the problem.

**Dan Zorn, Assistant Superintendent of Schools from Kalispell,** rose in support of SB 24. **Mr. Zorn** submitted written testimony, **EXHIBIT(eds23a11)**.

**Bill Sutton, representing School District # 29,** indicated support for SB 24.

**Bob Nystuem, President of the Kalispell Chamber of Commerce,** endorsed SB 24. **Mr. Nystuem** maintained that economic development starts with education and the core of education is the funding of K-12 schools. **Mr. Nystuem** cited the successful implementation of the "School to Work Program" between the Kalispell School

District and the city of Kalispell. He declared that high schools must be funded in order to continue successful programs.

**Eric Feaver, Montana Education Association/Montana Federation of Teachers**, rose in support of SB 24 and SB 239. **Mr. Feaver** held that the current system of funding schools is not working due to the drop in enrollments.

**Opponents' Testimony:**

**Dave Puyear, Montana Rural Education Association**, raised concern with SB 24. **Mr. Puyear** stated that limited dollars are available and shifting funds in a different fashion would have a dramatic affect on rural education in Montana. He reported that this measure is very divisive and urged the committee to proceed cautiously.

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**Informational Testimony:**

**Lance Melton, Montana School Boards Association**, offered information regarding the distribution of funds to public schools, **EXHIBIT(eds23a12)**. **Mr. Melton** also submitted written testimony, **EXHIBIT(eds23a13)**.

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**Questions from Committee Members and Responses:**

**SEN. MIGNON WATERMAN** wondered if **SEN. BOHLINGER** had given any thought to a better definition of a high school. **SEN. BOHLINGER** stated that he had not given much thought to that but **Eddy McClure** had suggested an amendment clarifying the definition of a high school. He also suggested the committee discuss whether the definition should be expanded

**SEN. JACK WELLS** asked for clarification as to the number of high schools in Missoula. **SEN. BUTCHER** informed him there are three instead of four, as previously stated on the fiscal note.

**SEN. BUTCHER** asked if Kalispell provided an alternative high school. **Mr. Zorn** reported that Kalispell has two alternative high schools. **SEN. BUTCHER** wondered if the alternative high school has been successful. **Mr. Zorn** explained the concept behind each school stating that they had been successful in decreasing the dropout rate.

**SEN. ED BUTCHER** wondered if **Mr. Zorn** thought the success of the alternative schools was not so much on size as it was on the curriculum. **Mr. Zorn** responded that only reducing the size of schools would not solve the problem.

**SEN. BUTCHER** asked if realigning curriculum to meet the needs of students would be more beneficial than class size. **Mr. Zorn** responded that both reducing class size and realigning the curriculum must work together. One could not be prioritized over the other.

**SEN. ALVIN ELLIS** wondered if splitting up the district would be possible under Montana law. **Mr. Zorn** maintained that the law prohibits such an action.

**SEN. ELLIS** invited **Kathy Fabiano** to inform the committee of the accreditation requirements in regards to administrators. **Ms. Fabiano** stated that she was not an accreditation expert and could not answer.

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**Closing by Sponsor:**

**SEN. RYAN** closed on SB 239. **SEN. RYAN** summarized that the committee must put forth a different funding formula to meet future needs in the classroom. He theorized the committee would be seeing other bills that would cost much more than this bill. He concluded by saying this issue is the most important factor to economic growth in Montana.

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**SEN. BOHLINGER** closed on SB 24. In summarizing previous testimony, **SEN. BOHLINGER** asked the committee to recognize the unfairness of present funding, asserting there is no incentive to continue to build programs. He reminded the members to focus on economic development proclaiming that it all begins with education.

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**HEARING ON SB 255**

**Sponsor:** **SEN. DON RYAN, SD 22, Great Falls**

**Proponents:**      **Lance Melton, Montana School Boards Association**  
                         **Denise Wheeler, Principal of Broadwater School,**  
                         **Helena**  
                         **Eric Feaver, Montana Education**  
                         **Association/Montana Federation of Teachers**

**Opponents:**        None

**Opening Statement by Sponsor:**

**SEN. RYAN** opened on SB 255 explaining the positive reasons to fund full day kindergartens. He expounded on the benefits and value of the program and the fact that the programs may be lost due to lack of funding. **SEN. RYAN** introduced test results from the Great Falls Public Schools that compared half day kindergarten programs with those that were full day, **EXHIBIT (eds23a14)**.

When referring to the large fiscal note, **SEN. RYAN** reminded the committee that transportation costs for a district would be cut because students would not have to be transported until the end of the school day.

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**Proponents' Testimony:**

**Lance Melton, Montana School Boards Association**, rose in support of SB 255 purporting that full time kindergarten programs would reach more children.

**Denise Wheeler, Principal of Broadwater School in Helena**, relayed her experience developing a full-time kindergarten in her school. She indicated the program ended, due to lack of funding, even though it was highly successful and had a waiting list. She made a request to the committee to consider SB 255.

**Eric Feaver, Montana Education Association/Montana Federation of Teachers**, echoed support of SB 255.

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**Opponents' Testimony:**        None

**Informational Testimony:** None

**Questions from Committee Members and Responses:**

**SEN. JON ELLINGSON** wondered why the fiscal note doubles in the second year of the biennium. **SEN. RYAN** assumed the program would grow in the second year.

**SEN. ELLINGSON** asked if school districts would promote this if the funding becomes available. **SEN. RYAN** agreed.

**SEN. ELLIS** disagreed asking for clarification from **Kathy Fabiano**. **Ms. Fabiano** stated that enrollment drives the funding for 2003. The first year of the biennium would not have children in the full-time program which would result in lower costs for the next year.

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Closing by Sponsor:

**SEN. RYAN** closed on SB 255.

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**ADJOURNMENT**

Adjournment: 5:45 P.M.

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SEN. BILL GLASER, Chairman

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LINDA ASHWORTH, Secretary

BG/LA

**EXHIBIT (eds23aad)**